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The Hunger Games Summarized version



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Chapter 1 by Rendon Edwards

Chapter 1

Katniss Everdeen, who tells her story in the first person, wakes up. It is the day of the reaping. She sees her little sister, Prim (short for Primrose), asleep in bed with their mother across the room. Katniss puts on her clothes to go hunting. The area where she and her family live is called the Seam, and it's part of District 12. They are at the edge of the district, which is enclosed by a high fence, and Katniss often crawls under the fence and enters the woods outside, where she forages and hunts. Her father taught her these skills before his death in a mine explosion when she was eleven years old, and she uses a bow he made. Though trespassing in the woods and poaching are illegal, nobody pays attention, and Katniss even sells meat to the Peacekeepers who are supposed to enforce the laws. Most people in the district, she explains, don't have enough food.

Chapter 2

As Prim walks up to the stage, Katniss, in a panic, rushes forward and shouts that she is

volunteering as tribute. A volunteer is allowed to take the place of the person whose name is drawn, but this never happens in

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Prim away from Katniss. Katniss's desperate crying will make the other tributes think she's

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remains silent and offers only a gesture of respect to Katniss. Haymitch falls off the stage while offering his congratulations.

The name of the boy tribute is drawn and it's Peeta Mellark. Katniss thinks about her interaction with Peeta years earlier. Her father had just died, and her mother fell into severe depression. They had run out of money and food—starvation is common in District 12, she says—and Katniss had wandered into the lane behind the shops of the wealthier townspeople. She searched the trash bins but found nothing. Suddenly a woman was screaming at her to leave from the back door of the bakery. Peeta, who was in Katniss's grade, was there, and he and the woman (his mother) went back inside. There was a commotion, then Peeta returned with two burned loaves of bread, his mother yelling behind him to feed them to the pigs. He had a welt on his cheek where his mother had hit him. He cautiously threw the loaves to Katniss instead. Katniss brought the bread home and fed her family. It made her hopeful they wouldn't starve, and she wondered if he had burned the bread on purpose to help her, despite knowing his mother would hit him for it. Later, she saw Peeta at the same time that she saw the first dandelion of spring. Recalling that dandelions are edible, she realized she would have to use the skills her father taught her to keep herself and her family alive, and she associates this realization with Peeta.

Katniss is escorted into the Justice Building and left in a room. Her mother and sister are brought in to say their goodbyes, and Katniss makes her mother promise not to fall apart again. She tells them she loves them as they're led out. Peter Mellark's father, the baker, comes in. Katniss often trades him squirrels for bread. He gives Katniss cookies and promises to make sure Prim is being fed. Next, Madge enters. She gives Katniss a pin with a gold bird in the center and asks Katniss to wear it into the arena. Lastly, Gale enters. He tells Katniss to find a bow if she can, and he says he won't let Katniss's family starve.

Katniss is driven to a train station where she meets Peeta, and they board a train and begin their journey to the Capitol. Katniss says District 12 is in what used to be Appalachia. It is still a coal mining area, as it was hundreds of years ago. The Capitol is in what used to be the Rockies.

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reapings from the various districts. When Katniss and Peeta joke about Haymitch's drunkenness, Effie says they shouldn't be laughing because Haymitch is the one who is going to be advising them and getting them sponsors. Just then Haymitch comes in drunk, vomits, and falls in the mess.

In the first three chapters, we are introduced to some of the book's main characters, notably Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of the novel. We also learn all the basic facts about the world in which the story takes place. Katniss is a sixteen-year-old girl living in what is essentially a dystopia, a fictional political state in which life is awful (George Orwell's 1984 was also a dystopian novel). The book is set at some unspecified time in the future, by which point the countries of North America as we currently know them have dissolved. The cause of this dissolution isn't fully explained, but Katniss does talk about the natural disasters that led to it. Among them are rising sea levels and severe storms, which suggest global warming played a role, as those are two of the most serious consequences scientists predict warming will cause. We also know there are widespread food shortages. The government of Panem, the country that rose up after North America's collapse, is totalitarian. It monitors the speech and actions of its citizens and mercilessly punishes anything it construes as dissent. The Hunger Games that give the book its title are the ultimate expression of its mercilessness and its power over its citizens.

But life is also terrible for the people of District 12 for more immediate reasons. Few people, we learn, have enough to eat. Many are malnourished and death by starvation is common. Moreover, the main industry in the region is coal mining, which is notoriously difficult and dangerous work. Katniss describes the miners, both men and women, heading to work with hunched shoulders and swollen knuckles, suggesting how physically hard the job is. We also know that both Katniss's and Gale's fathers died from an explosion in the mine. District 12 is in what's presently known as Appalachia, which is among the poorest regions in the modern United States, and from Katniss's description it seems the district is among the poorest regions of Panem.

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contrast between those who have money and those who don't becomes more prominent when Katniss has her first encounter with the government's wealth just after the reaping ceremony. She's taken to a room in the Justice Building that she says is the richest place she's ever been in, and she marvels at the luxury of it, particularly the plush velvet furniture. Katniss only knows what velvet is because her mother has a dress with a velvet collar, a detail that underscores how little her family has by comparison. Another such detail is mentioned on the tribute train: Katniss has her first shower, something she could never do at home because they have no hot water unless they boil it. Later, she gorges herself at dinner, having never had so much food in front of her before.

Katniss is very much a product of her dystopian environment, and her character is revealed gradually throughout these chapters, notably in her language. We learn that, though she is only a teenager, she is the primary caretaker in her family, and more than anyone she is responsible for keeping them fed. She gets food from foraging and hunting, and as a result she has no qualms about killing animals. In fact, because of her constant exposure to death, she seems desensitized to it. This attitude is evident at the very start of the story, in her willingness to drown her sister's cat, Buttercup, when it first came to them. It also appears when she talks about the human suffering and deaths she's witnessed, in her own life as she sees people starving and in the televised Hunger Games. She is very unemotional describing these scenes, presenting the facts and not elaborating on her feelings about them. It is clear she finds them horrible, but not shocking. She treats them as part of her environment rather than as abnormalities.

We also learn about Katniss's family relationships. Her father was obviously a role model for her, and it's clear the pain of his death hasn't totally abated. She says she still wakes up at night frequently, dreaming of the explosion that killed him and screaming for him to run. Her relationship with her mother, meanwhile, is fraught with mixed feelings. She still clearly resents her mother for falling apart emotionally when Katniss's father was killed. Katniss was only eleven at the time, but she was forced to take on the responsibility of feeding the family. As a result, she had to use the hunting and foraging skills her father taught her to become the new

provider for the family. Notably, this uncontrollable position has endowed her with valuable survival skills that will help her later. Katniss's relationship with Gale even points out that hunting a human should be a crime, but Katniss's role as caretaker is most pronounced when she is forced to hunt. Katniss's father taught her to take out a tessera to keep her odds of being selected as tribute low, and even despite these low odds Katniss

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worries about her. She treats Prim with a gentleness we don't see her exhibit anywhere else, and she says explicitly she would do anything to protect Prim

Katniss's memory of her encounter with Peeta is also significant as it creates a conflict within Katniss that she will have to deal with later. She essentially credits Peeta giving her the two loaves of bread years earlier with restoring her hope and saving her after her father's death. Without this act, she thinks she and her family may have starved, and she also thinks about how Peeta was present when she realized she would have to take care of her family. Now she connects her survival of that difficult period with Peeta and his uncommon act of kindness. The irony of the situation is that she may eventually have to kill this boy who helped keep her alive, since only one person can survive the Hunger Games. Her only hope, she thinks, is that someone else will kill him first, suggesting she feels she may not be able to do so if the situation arises.

These first chapters establish the theme of suffering as entertainment, one of the main themes of the novel. The Hunger Games, we learn, are a televised contest in which children fight one another to the death, and they are watched by all of Panem. Their main attraction is the actual, real-life suffering experienced by the tributes. In this way, the Hunger Games recall the gladiatorial Games of Ancient Rome, but they function as essentially an exaggerated, dystopian version of reality television. They are dissimilar from reality television, however, in that the government mandates them, and it's clear that many of the residents of District 12, and likely those of the other poor districts, view them as a form of oppression. Indeed, the government intends them as a reminder of the districts' defeat and powerlessness. The forced sense of festivity that accompanies the Games, evident in the public ceremony of the reaping in these chapters, only makes them more grotesque and underscores how insensitive the Capitol is to the lives of Panem's ordinary citizens. In the Capitol and the wealthier districts, on the other hand, the Games are immensely popular and the greatest form of entertainment the citizens have.

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advantage, or at least not be at a disadvantage. To this end, she frequently masks her true feelings, instead showing the cameras only what she wants them to see, and she must manage both what she experiences internally and how she wants to look to the outside world. The theme suggests that appearances, particularly as they are presented in the media, can be as important as reality

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